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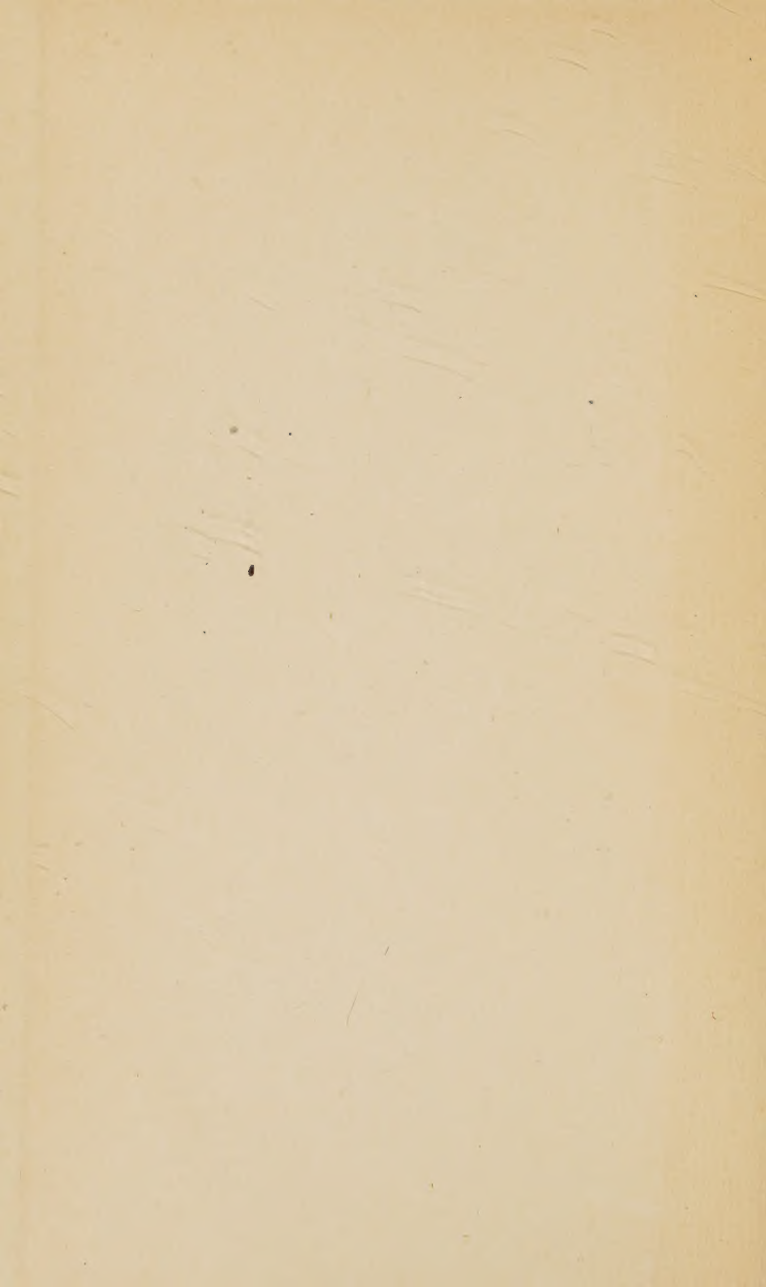
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The raven and the chariot



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# The Raven and the Chariot







THE RAVEN AND THE CHARIOT





# The Raven and the Chariot

New Thoughts on Elijah  
the Tishbite

*By*

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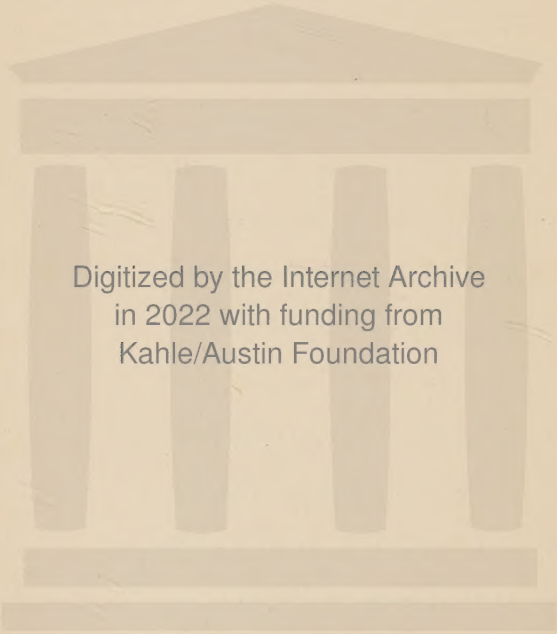
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## CHAPTER I.

### A GREAT MAN INTRODUCED.

ONE of the greatest characters in the Old Testament is introduced with the simple announcement that he is Elijah the Tishbite. The man who instinctively pieces himself out as much as possible with high heels and a plug hat, grows hot under the collar if he is introduced with his front portico or back stairs left off; but the real big man never cares whether anything is said about his size or not. The greatness that must depend upon its two rows of bright buttons for recognition, is lost if it dares to show itself away from dress parade; but greatness that is greatness is known in its shirt-sleeves.

Elijah comes before us without any varnish or veneer, but we do not have to be told to take off our hats. When some folks introduce a lion to a lamb they think it necessary to call attention to mane and tail, but the Bible makes no mistakes of that kind. Indeed, God's way of introducing a great man is always god-

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like. The man is put down on the stage of action and speaks for himself. There is no blare of trumpets as he comes in. He walks out from the unknown as quietly as creation came out of chaos, and is left to declare himself and make way for himself.

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," and there you have Adam, with no more ado than we get a rosebud. A simple announcement; that is all. No fanfare, no red fire, no clash of cymbal and drum, and yet the moment Adam opened his eyes human history had begun.

"Lamech lived and begat a son, and he called his name Noah," and there he stood, a man of such colossal faith that he could trust God and do carpenter work on the ark for 120 years without seeing the slightest result.

"The Lord said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred," and another great man comes on the scene, and the nation that is to prepare the highway of holiness for the coming of the King begins.

And so it goes on, with statement after statement, made as simply as we would an-

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nounce the time of day, as giant after giant steps forth, and begins to set in motion great events, until one of the greatest of all stands before us with the simple announcement that he is Elijah the Tishbite, and from that moment the clouds obey him, and fire and storm come at his will.

The sublime brevity of the Bible about some things is most remarkable. Not many words are used in introducing a man, but chapters are devoted to telling what he does. God shows plainly what is important by where He puts the italics. We know that He considers the life of a good man a great thing in this world, by the space the Bible gives to it. The Book of Genesis contains fifty chapters, and covers twenty-three centuries of history, and yet nearly a third of it is devoted to Abraham, and a fifth to Joseph. Much more is said about Daniel than about creation, and a whole book is devoted to Job—and even the most of that has to do with him when he was the poorest man in the country. But, for that matter, more space is given to the blind beggar who threw away his cloak to get to Jesus, than to all the gold mines.

It never adds anything to the value of the



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timber to know what kind of a stump it came from, and yet we would all like to know a great deal about the life of the Tishbite before the day when he stands so grandly before Ahab. What an interesting book the story of his boyhood would make, and what pictures there would be on every page! Can't we almost see him climbing trees and going through brush fences? I can shut my eyes and see him lugging home a bag of walnuts, with a wolfish-looking dog trotting along behind him. I can see the stains on his hands and lips, and note that he limps as if he had a stone bruise on his heel.

I fancy that, when the old prophet was a boy, he was all boy. Boy all over and all the way through, even on Sunday. That he had big streaks in him that were as good as could be, and other streaks equally robust that his mother and the neighbors were sorry for. That he was noisy and boisterous, and ready to do anything for fun, from standing on his head to tying foxes' tails together, as Samson did. If he never played a joke on his grandfather, I believe it was because the old gentleman joined the innumerable caravan before the young Tishbite came on the scene.

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And yet he may not have been that kind of a boy at all. He may have been as saintly as Samuel, and as much of a dreamer as Joseph, but it is easier to think that he was n't. But, whether he was or not, we shall never know until all mystery is revealed. He was a Tishbite, however, and the name sounds boylike clear through. May be it was a nickname he got from the other boys.

When one boy gives another a name, he does n't lie awake at night, trying to find one that will sound like oil coming out of a jug. He just grabs a nickname as he runs, and throws it at him; and if it hits him fair, it catches and sticks. Tishbite was no doubt a name that suited the prophet to a T in some way, or he would hardly have borne it so long. It may have been a name that counted against him when he first bore it, like "Nazarene," and "Galilean," but he had so much good timber in him that it did n't hurt him at all. I wonder if there was n't some special reason why the Lord liked the name, and kept it from being lost?

God has a name for each one of us, that He does n't let everybody know the meaning of. "I will give him a new name, which no

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man knoweth, save he that receiveth it." When the Lord gave Jacob his new name, it was a sweet secret between them for many a day.

But whatever the name of Tishbite may have meant when Elijah was a boy, it meant terror and destruction to the prophets of Baal in his mature manhood, and something sweeter than honey or the honeycomb to the widow's son, and the young man Elisha, who gave up everything to follow him. Any name may be little more than empty sound at first; but when underscored by life and personality, it may become something to love and reverence. Washington and Lincoln are great names to us, because great men bore them; and Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold are infamous names, because we hate the deeds of the men who had them.

As Elijah comes before us with the abruptness of Melchizedek, his first declaration does much to account for the grandeur of his character. When some people are introduced, they talk about the weather simply to skirmish for position, but the prophet used the weather probabilities as a general would artillery. He shelled the woods with them, and brought down game. Hear him:

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"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

There is a declaration for you. Every word has the ring of chilled steel.

"As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand!"

Whenever and wherever a man talks like that, look out for something out of the common to happen. Such a knowledge of God and sense of His presence would make adamant out of soapstone. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." There is not a shadow of doubt about it. They are the folks who make the wheels of the world go round.

To know God and have an unbroken sense of His presence, is a better preparation for a great career than a degree from any college; and I am not discounting the value of education either. I believe in it with both hands up, but education alone can never make character. It takes acquaintance with God to do that. Follow any man whose religious life parallels that of Elijah, and you will see signs and wonders. The prophet knew God, and he knew Him well enough to trust Him. There would

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be more fire falling from heaven, if in this life there were more of us like him.

We do not know to what tribe the man of great faith belonged, nor who his father was, nor how long he had been filling the office of prophet, but we do know that he must have had an unusual and very sweet experience with the Lord. The day that the ravens brought him his first meal could not have been his first acquaintance with hard times. It was certainly not the first time he had taken his bread from the hand of God. We know this, because faith matures like the growth of a seed. It is first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. Walking with God must begin with very short steps. Faith is like the mustard seed. Not much of it at first; but as it tries the Lord and finds Him true, it grows, and in time becomes a great tree. George Mueller began his life of great faith by trusting God to take care of himself and family, and fifty years later he could just as easily trust Him to take care of thousands of orphans.

It is, therefore, extremely likely, that if the whole religious life of the Carmelite were known, it would be full of thrilling interest, because of the hard times he had seen long

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before he was fed by the ravens. It may have taken years of preparation, by various trials and tests, to bring the prophet to where God could trust him with power to regulate the rainfall for a whole kingdom, but when the fullness of time had come, how well he stood the test!

The Lord never has to try experiments with any man to find out what is in him; for He knows the heart, and the end from the beginning; but He always trains the man for his mission by bringing him into suitable providential relations to fit him for it. The Lord has done some wonderful things with weak men, but I do not recall that He ever shook the earth with an untrained one.

One great essential for a life that is to be pre-eminently one of faith, is that the man himself must know for a certainty that he does trust God, and that the Lord can trust him. As long as he has any doubt in his own mind about it, there will be danger of failure in everything he undertakes; but when he once finds out beyond all question that his trust in God is complete, he becomes a tower of strength from that day forth.

Paul did n't say that he could do all things through Christ until after he had the thorn in

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his side, and Job did n't say, "I know that Thou canst do everything," until after he had lost everything and the Lord had restored it to him. Abraham knew God a great deal better after he had offered up Isaac, because the test enabled him to know both God and himself better than ever before.

The reason why all things work together for good to them that love God, is because love to God is always the gainer by being tested. "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James i, 2-4.) If you find yourself in a furnace into which your own wrongdoing has not brought you, it means that God sees good metal in you, and is refining you in His crucible. So count it all joy, for you have good reason to.



## CHAPTER II.

### AMONG THE CROWS AT CHERITH.

AT our first view of the fearless man of God to whom these pages are devoted, he seems to have been having a hard time with a city charge that was more than he could handle. Religion was at a low ebb when he preached his first sermon in Samaria, and it did n't rise any during his stay there. The oldest inhabitant could n't remember when there had been a revival, and the wonder is that he did n't begin hunting for juniper berries much sooner than he did. He was located in a very genteel part of the city, and had some remarkably influential people on his visiting list, but he seems to have been unable to "blend the elements," or to reach the masses, and so a change in his field of labor was deemed advisable.

In the next scene, therefore, we see him receiving an appointment from the Jordan Conference to the Cherith Circuit, to which he went with a spirit of such uncomplaining obedience

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that we instinctively hold up our hands in wondering admiration; for the prospect before him was about the least inviting upon which a man of God ever entered, and yet he “moved” without a murmur, and performed his part so well on his new charge that he was permitted to stay the full three years’ term there.

There was not even a suggestion of salary in sight, and yet he stepped off as spry as if he were going to a banner appointment. To relieve him from uneasiness about his support, however, he was told that the ravens had been commanded to feed him there—a duty which they performed with a faithfulness and regularity that ought to make some of our Church boards ashamed of themselves. No man with a pocket full of money ever went to market with any less concern than Elijah set off for the Brook Cherith when this fact was made known to him.

There are preachers—but, of course, none of them live in our part of the country—who would have given the ravens a holiday to begin with, while they sat down to take a good long think about the matter; but the Tishbite went to packing up without a moment’s delay, as soon as he got the word to move forward. Before

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some preachers of to-day would have been willing to begin uncording bedsteads and taking down stovepipes, they would have wanted to know something about Cherith, and whether the ravens of that country were reliable or not. They would have wanted to know whether they were many or few, and whether they were much given to quarreling among themselves or no. They would have asked all manner of questions about the particular ravens that were to keep them in breadstuff; wanting to know how many of them were eminently respectable, and how many were just common birds. They would have insisted upon knowing whether the Cherith ravens were as unreliable as their brethren in some other sections had shown themselves to be.

These and a great many other things they would have felt it their religious duty to know before they lifted a hand to begin packing their knapsacks. But all that Elijah cared to know was that the Lord was to go with him, and he was ready to start as soon as he could gird up his loins and put on his sandals.

In his instructions for Cherith, he was charged to turn eastward and hide himself—a charge that every Christian worker should strive to follow to the very letter. If we will

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but keep our faces fixed steadily upon the source of light, and hide ourselves behind the cross, success is bound to come sooner or later. The prophet was also told to drink of the brook, which was to afford him an ample supply while he remained there.

Every Christian worker should drink of the brook by the side of which God places him. Its life must become his. To help people we must get down to where they live. The man on stilts may be able to throw circulars into upstairs windows with considerable skill, but he can not do very much for people who live on the ground.

“ The village priest of austerity  
Climbed up in the high church steeple,  
To be near God, that He might hand  
His word down to the people.  
In sermon script he daily wrote  
What he thought was sent from heaven,  
And poured it out on the people's heads,  
Two times one day in seven.  
In his age God said, ‘Come down and die,’  
And he cried out from the steeple,  
‘Where art Thou, Lord?’ and the Lord replied,  
‘Down here among My people.’ ”

Salvation Army workers get hold of people in the slums, because they make their homes there. Had Christ come into this world on a

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visit, as angels have done, He could never have saved it. He took up His abode here, and dwelt among us as long as self-righteous men would allow Him to stay. He drank of the brook of human life, and knew by actual experience the meaning of sorrow and trouble and disappointment. He knew the meaning of loneliness and misunderstanding, for He drank of the brook in which such water is found. He could taste death for every man, because He had first tasted it with man. Other things being equal, the best preacher is the one who knows the lives of his people best.

The preacher must drink of the brook to which his ministerial duty sends him. If he takes no interest in the hopes, the plans, and the life aims of those to whom he preaches, he will soon find out that nobody is being helped very much toward heaven by what he says in the pulpit. He must drink of the common life about him. He must know where his people live, and how they live. He must be able to make them know that he cares for them, and wants to be a help and a blessing to them. Unless he can do this, he may be able to speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and yet accomplish little by his ministry.

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The prophet was to drink of the brook. Not of the lake, or the river, or the well. When God finds it necessary to thrash a mountain, He takes a worm to do it with. A long, hard dry spell was coming, and yet a little trickling stream of a brook was all the man of God was to have upon which to depend. Unless some of us can see a whole ocean of supply in plain view all the time, how miserably wretched do we make ourselves! We forget that a little brook with God's word behind it is better than any artesian well we can find for ourselves.

We would all have a deeper and more constant peace if we would only trust our Heavenly Father to do for us a father's part, and not be in a fret and strain, striving to do impossible things for ourselves. The Lord gives us a brook, and yet we almost kill ourselves in trying to dig a well, or make a lake, or build a canal, or find a river that will always stay bank full, feeling certain that if we depend upon God's brook alone we shall perish.

The brook may sometimes dry up, as it did for the prophet; but when it does, the Lord always has another good place ready and waiting for us. Search the Scriptures, and you will

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find that no one ever dies of want beside the brook which the Lord has promised shall sustain; but how often we turn away from the God-given brook and set out in quest of an ever-flowing spring for ourselves!

We despise and neglect this means of grace, and that, because it is not what we want it to be. We get a preacher whose voice or looks or manner we don't like, and we lose all the good he might do us by staying away from church to read a book. What is this but turning our back on God's brook and looking for a spring whose water will suit us better?

The prayer-meeting does n't please us, because it no longer runs in the groove in which we want it to go, and we begin to stay away, and do something else with the time thus gained. What is this but refusing to drink of the brook the Lord has providentially given to water us, and trying to dig our own well?

The Sunday-school is another brook upon which many of the Lord's people have turned their backs. "What good is there in going to Sunday-school?" they say. "That's for children," and so they stay at home and sleep, or visit, or read, or chat. No wonder so many souls are famishing, and are always on the hunt for



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stagnant pools, to get a little water for the cattle and the mules.

Brother, drink of the Lord's brook, and you will be taken care of when the famine comes. The social life of the Church is another brook of which some very well-meaning people refuse to drink, and so they remain strangers to most of the membership, and then complain that there is no sociability in the Church.

The religious paper is another of the Lord's brooks too many people neglect. Good reading in the home is also another. If we will continually try to get all the good we can out of little things, we shall be well taken care of in the day of famine. So let us not despise God's brooks because they may look small and about ready to fail, but remember that the day of small things is sure to be a day of good things when the Lord brings us to it. Some of the sweetest water ever found comes out of little springs.

When the new preacher reined up his camel at Cherith, there was no comfortable parsonage for him to go into. All he had to make him feel at home was God's promise that he should be taken care of, but that was enough. There was no committee in waiting to meet him, and arrange for a donation party to fill his pantry

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with dried apples and starch. Nobody dropped in to see if he needed any help in getting to housekeeping. No leading brother or sister felt called upon to go and advise him how he had better trim his sails in his preaching. Nobody neglected important work at home to go and tell him what a grand man his predecessor was, and how impossible it would be for anybody else ever to measure up to him.

The woman who knows everything about everybody, and is willing to tell it without much urging, was n't at home when the weary prophet arrived at Cherith, and the man who feels that he has a brotherly duty to perform in posting the new preacher concerning people who may have their feelings hurt, and stop paying pew rent if the preaching is against any kind of sin known in that township, did n't manage to fall in with the prophet just as he was filling his gourd at the brook for the first time. Neither did he have to do his best to keep from yawning in the face of the man whose only Christian work is to let the new preacher know the names of all the prominent people who will be sure to "jine" in a little while if the preaching happens to suit them; and so the Tishbite must have found his beginning at Cherith a little lonesome.

### CHAPTER III.

#### SCRAPING THE FLOUR BARREL.

THE time spent beside the Brook Cherith made it an easy matter for Elijah to go down to Zarephath, and begin his ministry in the Church of the Empty Flour Barrel; for the Lord sometimes promotes the faithful man by giving him a harder place. He wants to know that He can trust him, but we are very slow to see it in that light.

It was that way with almost every faithful worker whose history is given in the Bible. David found it better to walk in the valley of the shadow of death than beside the still waters, and feasting in the presence of his enemies was better than lying down in green pastures. Boarding with the ravens so long made it a very easy matter for the Tishbite to look into the widow's empty meal-keg without turning pale. Faith grows as it goes, and every step makes it easy to take the next one, provided they come in proper order.

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The same unbroken trust and unquestioning obedience on the part of the faithful prophet was therefore manifest when the brook dried up, and he was told to go to Zarephath, where a poor widow was to take the place of the ravens in preparing his meals for him.

Some of us would have fallen back in the harness and got balky right there, and the Poor Widow Mission would have had to be undertaken by some man who had fat on his ribs to begin with, while we were making good time toward some place of our own selection, where the voice of the turtle could still be heard in the land. We would have put on a long face, and said:

"I pray Thee, have me excused, for I ought to have something better this time. For lo! these many days I've been as good as buried among the crows down there at Cherith; without the sight of a single friendly face; a congregation full of croakers; dependent entirely upon donations for my support, and sustained by a monotony of fare that took away all appetite. I ought to have a better place this time, and justice to my health demands it. To have that poor widow and her sickly boy confronting me every time I sat down to dinner,

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and know that every crumb I ate had been baked from the scrapings of her flour barrel, would take all the inspiration out of me, and make my feet like lead in the pulpit. If I don't get a better place than that this time, I'm afraid I shall have to go to peddling books, or try the life insurance business."

In fact, there are a good many preachers living to-day, who would have been scared clear out of the ministry by just one look into that poor woman's flour barrel; but the late pastor of Cherith had no concern about the matter, for he knew from blessed experience some of the wonderful things his God could do whenever there was need for doing them. He had never had his meals more promptly in his life than during the years he put in on the Cherith Circuit. His mother may have forgotten him, and been late with his breakfast sometimes, but his God never failed him, and the same God is still willing to take upon Himself the support of the preacher who will preach the preaching that He bids him.

And now, tell me this: If it was safe for Elijah to leave the bread question to the Lord, why is n't it safe for us to do it? God made those ravens prepare a table for him with as

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much precision as the sun rose and set. It did n't make any difference where those birds were, or what they were doing, they had to drop everything else and take the prophet bread and flesh every night and morning—Fridays and Lent included—and no preacher who looks after his own appointments has ever found a place where his marketing was done any more acceptably than those ravens did it for Elijah. The Lord never failed him, or disappointed his faith, and so it was about as much of a habit for him to trust and obey as it was to draw his breath.

The question with him was n't where he would like to go, but, "Lord, where do you want me?" and with a manner as joyous as a psalm he picked up his saddlebags and set out for Zarephath by the shortest route, and when he reached the gate of the city, behold! there was the widow gathering sticks to cook his supper. God always has somebody preparing food for the man who is faithful. Let no one forget it.

Have you never noticed that, whenever the Lord has wanted an instrument for important use, He has always taken some one who was already busy? Moses was tending the flocks

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of his father-in-law; Joseph was carrying a message to his brethren; David was taking supplies to the army; and now here was the poor widow, with starvation staring her in the face, doing the best she could for herself and son. When the devil wants a helper, he takes the first loafer he can get his hands on, but the Lord has never had any use for a lazy man.

A handful of meal in the barrel, and a little oil in the cruse, was n't much, from a human standpoint, but it was all the Lord needed to sustain His faithful servant until harvest came again. How it would improve the preaching, if the preacher would only remember that a little with the Lord has always been enough!

The Lord could just as easily have sent the prophet to be entertained by the Lord Mayor of Zidon, but He glorified Himself the more, and at the same time sustained the faithful widow and her son, by sending His servant to her home instead. It may also be that this was to teach people, who never want to keep a preacher over night, something to their advantage; for there are a good many plain hints in the Bible that nobody can lose anything by having a godly man for a boarder.

But let us notice the new preacher's greet-



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ing to his hostess: "Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel." This assured her that he was a friend, ready to make the friendly water covenant with her, as our Lord did with the woman of Samaria. For a limited time this covenant binds those who make it to befriend each other as natural brothers, and is still observed in the Orient. Sisera besought Jael to make the water covenant with him, but she refused by giving him milk instead. The preacher will find a welcome when it is known that he comes as a friend.

The prophet also showed great tact by asking the woman for that which she was best able to give. Her meal barrel was low, but she probably had access to some good spring. When he saw how readily she set out to get the water, he stopped her, and said:

"Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand."

Had he asked for the bread first, it may be that he would not have received it so quickly. He also showed keen discernment by asking her to bring it in her hand. She need n't take the trouble to put in on a plate, or carry it out on a tray, covered with a napkin. He was used to roughing it, and could take it just as it

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came from the ashes, and from the scarcity of water at that time, there may have been a good deal of kindness in that concession.

If preachers would only carry the same spirit of kindly consideration with them in their pastoral visiting, they would never lack for a true welcome. Although the Lord had sent His prophet to the widow with the assurance that she would sustain him—and this to him meant that she would be given the power to do it—he made no greater demands upon her than simply to supply his immediate necessity. He didn't ride up with a high head, and call for hot coffee and chicken to begin with, and tell her to send her boy out to put his camel up. He only asked for a little bread and water to take the keen edge from his appetite; and when a preacher gets to where he is willing to live on bread and water, if need be, rather than leave the ministry, there is nothing to prevent his preaching the Gospel about right.

Notice, also, how naturally the man of God was talking for his Master, before the woman began to scrape her meal barrel to make a cake for his supper. He didn't lose any time in discussing the drouth, or in talking about the slim prospect for crops, or in trying to find out

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how much the widow knew about the affairs of the people in the next house; but he got right down to business for his Divine Master before the woman got a fire started, and made the leanness of her pantry open the way to tell her some things about the greatness and goodness of his God, that brightened her life for many a day. He planted her feet on the Rock of Ages before he broke his fast, by giving her promise of help from above that filled her soul with comfort the moment she believed it.

There is nothing like a promise of God for changing any kind of a dark prospect into a bright one. I have no doubt the poor woman sang like a lark, all the time she was getting the prophet's supper ready, in spite of the fact that she was going to put the last crumb she had on the table. Giving our own worldly wisdom to people in trouble will not ease the jolts and jars for them; but when we give them God's word for the help needed, and persuade them to believe it, we make them rich. We should never forget that our first business in this world is to be ambassadors for Christ, and, to make Him known, we should watch for opportunities and improve them with tact.

Some preachers would have been in Zare-

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phath a week before the widow found out whether they belonged to Church or not; for it is a lamentable fact that there are preachers who so exhaust the subject of religion on Sunday that they appear to avoid it all the rest of the week. Indeed, men can be found who almost touch the stars when they preach, who scarcely mention the subject of religion when they visit the sick. But not so the Carmelite. He is always either talking to the Lord or about Him, every glimpse we get of him. How it would enrich us all if we would only be like him in this respect!

A notable thing about the ministry of the great prophet is, that he always "lived on his work," and put in all his time right where the Lord placed him. We do n't hear of his taking any summer vacations—aside from his excursion to the juniper tree—or of his spending the greater part of his time in lecturing, or in looking after his farm somewhere. Though it must be admitted that he did at one time preempt a small piece of depressed real estate in the vicinity of Horeb, to which he seems to have become strongly attached; but even this he was willing to give up without a murmur when

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his unministerial conduct was pointed out at the next Conference.

Elijah seems to have been a man who never neglected his pastoral duties in trying to accumulate property, and he did n't feel that the first duty of a preacher's life is to get on the opposite side of the hill from the poorhouse, by paying strict attention to the consideration of Number One every chance he gets. In visible assets he was so poor that he had nothing but an old sheepskin mantle to leave his successor, and yet he could be happy in facing the darkest kind of a prospect, for he knew only too well that the Everlasting Arms were underneath him, and that no good thing would be denied him.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ALTAR ON THE MOUNTAIN.

NO MATTER where we find the Tishbite, his position at that moment may be studied with profit. See him as he stands on Mount Carmel, tall and straight as an oak, while the storm gathers darkly about him! He was n't afraid of provoking opposition. He had faith for a great revival, and had no fears that the interest would be killed by somebody's indiscretion or a change of weather. And how plain his preaching was that day to Ahab:

"Ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim!"

Think of a preacher speaking out in a way as clear-cut as that in our time, to the leading member of his official board! There was no "as it were," or "in a degree," or "so to speak" about it, and yet this was the man who was afterward chosen to be lifted up bodily into

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heaven. What a commotion it would raise to hear preaching as plain as that now in some of our modern pulpits!

Remember that Ahab was at the head of things at Mount Carmel, and his wife had been running the Church until she had about come to the conclusion that she owned it, and yet the new preacher got the Bible wide open in his very first sermon.

The great object of Elijah's preaching that day was not to advance his own popularity, or answer infidelity, although the air was full of it, but to bring down fire from heaven that would burn up and destroy idolatrous unbelief. He was not there to defend his religion, but to show that God was in it. He did n't begin his meeting with a series of able discourses to prove that Baal worship was a house built on the sand, but he let it be known at once that he stood there in the name of the Lord of Hosts, and he did it, too, in a way that convinced everybody that he was expecting wonderful results.

There will be no revival when people can see, clear across the house, that the preacher is n't expecting much. If the man in the pulpit is indifferent about results, nobody else will take

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much interest, and everything will go with a drag from the start.

When the people had heard the words of the man of God, and acted upon them, by standing near where the blessing was to fall—what Methodists would call coming around the altar—he took immediate steps to fulfill all human conditions for promoting the revival, by repairing the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

God never sends any fire to a broken-down altar. Let us remember that. Before fire will fall from heaven, it must have a clean place upon which to strike. It is folly to look for any marked conversions in a Church where there is no true and earnest worship. It would be as reasonable to look for a crop where no seed had been planted. Sinners never become anxious while the Church is sound asleep. Before the fire will come, the broken-down altar must be rebuilt. Pastor and people must be very close together on the Mount of Consecration, and all be looking straight up.

The prophets of Baal were anxious to begin early in the morning, without a thought or a care as to whether their altar was in a condition to receive the sacrifice or not. Mere pro-



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fessors are always in a hurry to have a revival meeting over with. Like any other disagreeable duty, it can not be ended too soon.

When the Spirit of God leads, it is step by step, but the flesh wants to do things on the run. It is a good evidence that the Lord is not in the meeting when everybody is in a hurry to have it over with. Nothing will kill a revival meeting with any more certainty than fleshly impatience to have fire come too near sunrise. So when you want a good meeting, don't spend much time in watching the clock. There was no counting of the minutes on the day of Pentecost. This may be why there were "about three thousand souls" to count.

But the old man in the sheepskin mantle was in no haste. God's man never hurries. Walking by faith, and not by sight, the prophet knew that he had certainty before him, and could afford to wait. He was bound to have things right to begin with, if it took all summer. So, with the greatest deliberation, he gave strict attention to all things needful, and neglected nothing.

The true evangelist is always a man who understands the importance of looking well to little things. Elijah knew that success could

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only he had by faithfulness, and so he looked carefully after matters himself, and knew from his own personal knowledge that no part of the work had been slighted. He did n't appoint one committee to get the stones together, and another to lay them up, nor did he depend upon somebody working by the day to dig the trench, but he hung his mantle on the nearest limb, rolled up his sleeves, and went to work himself.

No wonder that at the proper time he could look into the sky and call for fire with as much confidence as a child would ask for bread. He knew that his part of the work had been properly and faithfully done, and this gave him confidence to fold his arms complacently while his enemies were pouring cold water on his work. It is not hard to trust God for results when we know that what we have done has been in strict accord with the Divine will; but when there is any doubt about it, how quick we lose heart when the first splash of cold water comes!

The prophet knew that he was right with God, and this gave him all the assurance he wanted that he was being Divinely led. The tide of revival is not apt to rise any higher than the leader's spiritual life. If he is out of com-

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munion with God, his ministry can not be very much of a blessing to the people.

Showers of blessing can only fall upon the pews when the pulpit has an overflowing cup. If the spiritual life of the pastor has so declined that his preaching is merely intellectual, and his prayers only from the lip, nothing he can say or do will bring the Spirit of God nearer to anybody's heart.

We know that the Carmelite was right with God, because whatever he said or did was with power. He was recognized as speaking with authority by saint and sinner. A few words to Obadiah—a man who “feared the Lord greatly”—took right hold of his heart; filled him with courage and hope, and made him willing to go at once and meet Ahab. And, by the way, the revival that comes down from above always begins with Obadiah, “the man who fears the Lord greatly.”

When Elijah spoke to Ahab, his words had such effect upon that haughty monarch that he proceeded at once to do what was wanted, and when he said to the people, “Come near unto me,” they came. When he said, “Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape!” it was immediately done. Had he begun

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his preliminary work by going to Ahab first, and not to Obadiah, that meeting on the mountain might have had a different ending.

It is clearly evident that the prophet was right with God, because he betrayed not the slightest fear or uneasiness as to the outcome, and gave the opposition all the odds with an air of robust confidence.

Preachers who are afraid that science and higher criticism are going to tear the Bible to pieces, might study the composure of the old prophet on Mount Carmel with much profit.

Judged by sight and sense, everything was against him. The whole country was in an awful condition of rebellion against God. Idolatry of the most filthy and beastly character had poisoned and permeated everything, and as he looked out over the blackened plain, and into the cold and brutish faces before him, nothing but unflinching faith in the God whose ravens had fed him, kept him from losing heart. But his faith did it, and did it easily. Faith is a mightier force than dynamite, and the man who has it, knows it.

If science and research can take the Bible from us, the sooner it does it the better. If the Bible is the Word of God, it can no more

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be hurt by anything men can do than was the cause of Christ by His crucifixion; and if it is not from God, the sooner it is destroyed the better off the world will be. So come on with your telescopes and microscopes, X-rays and radium lights.

When the preacher has no faith, how little he counts on the help of the Lord when he reaches a point where everything appears to be going wrong! If he undertakes to hold a revival meeting, it chills him to his spiritual marrow to have it rain on the opening night. He is ready to halt when he discovers that the people he most counted on for help are out of town, or have sickness in their homes.

How anxious he is when the janitor goes over to the enemy by first making the house too hot, and then too cold, and poisons the air with bad ventilation! What a burden of worry settles down upon him if a baby cries, or a dog takes attention from his sermon! And how ready he will be to conclude that the Lord has forsaken him if the organist stays away, and there is no one who can start a tune!

Contrast this state of mind with that of the old man on the mountain top, who, in spite of the great odds against him, could stir up the

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opposition to do its worst—like a boy poking a snake with a stick—by saying: “Cry louder to your god; peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.”

Notice that the prophet addressed himself directly to the conscience, and urged immediate decision, according to honest conviction, by saying: “If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him;” and he gave the people to understand that his God would that day manifest Himself in a Godlike manner.

In present times we are too prone to belittle the work of the Holy Spirit. We depend too little upon God, and too much upon things in which we should not place any dependence at all. Miraculous works of grace should be expected and prayed for, for the Lord is still a wonder worker, and should be declared as such. Salvation is as much a supernatural work as the bringing of fire from heaven, and the man of faith will count on and expect it.

God has spiritual laws that are as positive in their working, and as subject to conditions, as are those of the material world, and, when learned and complied with, power is the sure result. There are laws of prayer and faith as certainly as there are laws of steam and elec-

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tricity; laws that pertain to spiritual growth and fruitage, as surely as there are laws relating to agriculture. To secure spiritual results, there are human conditions that must be met, as surely as there are such in the production of corn and wheat.

To have the help of God on his farm, the farmer must do certain things in a certain way, and at a certain time; and to have God's help in spiritual things, the Christian must put himself in right relations to God's spiritual laws. The prophet did this by repairing the altar of the Lord that was broken down. He knew the Lord well enough to know that it would be a waste of breath to pray for fire before he had done his part.

Before any man can pray right, he must first do right. Whatever is wrong must be righted, if it takes a right eye or a hand. The altar signifies worship, and God's warriors are chosen from His worshipers. If there is anything that hinders our communion with God, we are not in the attitude of worship, and can not be until such wrong has been righted. The broken-down altar must be rebuilt before worship can be resumed.

If we have been willfully neglecting the

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means of grace, or shirking any duty, we may pray for a blessing for weeks and not get it. If we are at enmity with a neighbor, we may sell our goods to feed the poor, and yet have every fig tree barren of bloom in our religious life. If we murmur and chafe, and let an ungrateful spirit possess us, because our circumstances and surroundings are not what we want them to be, we may go to church with regularity, and read the Bible and pray every day, and still have a famine in our soul.

The broken-down altar must be built up, and every stone that belongs there put into it. The thing that breaks our communion with God and prevents worship must be made right, just as there must be proper insulation before we can have electric light. We may do a thousand things, all well and good in themselves, but while that one thing needful remains undone, there can be no worship. We must do the thing God tells us to do before anything else will count. It won't do any good to white-wash the telegraph poles if the insulation is wrong.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE COLD-WATER BRIGADE.

THE prophet took twelve stones. Thirteen would have been too many, and eleven not enough. This represents complete obedience and pure unselfishness, the very heart of right consecration. It will not do any good to pray for a great revival if our highest motive is that it shall be a feather in our cap; simply a big advertisement for Church or preacher, or that some less prosperous society may be crushed out. There must be twelve good stones in the altar before we have any right to ask for fire.

What we ask for ourselves we must also be asking for the struggling little Church around the corner. It will never do to want God to bless the Presbyterians and kill off the Methodists; or to strengthen the Quakers and weaken the Baptists. We must be free

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from sectarianism, bigotry, and narrowness, before the broken-down altar can be rebuilt. Every tribe must be represented by a good stone, even if the most of them are honey-combed with idolatry.

The broken-down altar was built up in the name of the Lord. Not in the prophet's name, or in the name of the tribe to which he belonged, or in the name of some big man in that neighborhood, who was willing to do something handsome in the way of an endowment. And it should be in the name of the Lord that every good work is undertaken. Whatever we undertake in the name of the Lord is sure to have His help behind it. To undertake in God's name means to do in His way, and by His guidance.

The man who undertakes to be a Christian in the name of the Lord will not have the devil for a silent partner in his business; and the mother who undertakes to train up her children in the name of the Lord will have more anxiety about their souls than she has about her own position in society.

"And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood." In what an orderly manner he proceeded with

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his work! This was his witness that his sacrifice was without blemish. It represents that full consecration and complete dedication to God that every one born of the Spirit should make. The man of God had now only to review his work, to assure himself that the sacrifice would be accepted; for, doing this, he would be convinced that he had done everything strictly according to God's will, and knowing this, he would be in no hurry about the fire. He was as well satisfied that it would come as if it were already burning upon the altar. It is not hard to believe when we once get on believing ground. Faith can rest and wait, but doubt refuses to be quiet because it has no feeling.

Before the old prophet says a word about cold water, I think I can see him carefully going over everything he has done, to make sure that nothing has been neglected or omitted. He counts the stones, to see that the twelve are all there, and tries them carefully, to make sure that not one is cracked or unsound. And then he closely examines the wood, to be sure that every stick is the best available, and properly placed, for he knows that God's first law is order.

The prophets of Baal hurried through their

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work in any way to get it over with; but not so with the man who had been counting the crows for three years at Cherith. With him everything had to be done decently and in order.

If there was any good, dry hickory to be had on that mountain, we may be sure that some of it was on that altar. Had the wood been like some I've seen unloaded at the parsonage, and worked off on the preacher at double what it was worth, the fire from heaven would not have fallen on Mount Carmel. God's fire can burn green wood, but it will only do it when dry is not to be had. Many a revival fails because some preachers and people are so slow in learning this. Like Cain, they think the Lord can be put off with anything that will rattle in a contribution box.

There would be more revivals, in both individual hearts and the Church, if not so many soggy chunks were put on the altar. God must have our very best before His fire will come. Our best may be very poor, but it can never be too poor if it is our best. Neither can our offering ever be good enough unless it is the best we can make. The offering of goat's hair was as acceptable as gold in the time of Moses, from the man who could do no better; but if

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he could do better he had to do it. One reason why some Churches are so full of spiritual death, is because they are packed with rotting goat's hair, carried there by people able to take gold, or silver, or fine twined linen.

The prophet was satisfied that the wood was all right, for he had cut and split it himself. He had n't sent a boy to do it. He had n't picked up a single stick that the prophets of Baal had dropped. He had also carefully skinned and dressed his sacrifice, and cut it up into the proper pieces, and knew that it was absolutely without blemish.

We have all seen pictures of a whole sheep burning on the altar; but no such offering was ever authorized by the law of Moses, and the suggestion of such a thing to a Jewish priest would have made him hold up his hands in holy horror. The sacrifice had to be dressed and properly cut in pieces, so that the worshiper might know that it was without blemish, and therefore accepted; thus pointing in type to the perfection of Christ, our Sacrifice. Some people get no comfort out of their religion, because they put the whole sheep of their own plan of salvation on the altar.

When at last the prophet had gone over

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everything, and satisfied himself that he had met the Lord's conditions perfectly, he had all the witness he wanted that the cold-water people would soon get the greatest setback of their lives, and so, with a confident smile, that no doubt made their flesh creep, he calmly told them to do their worst, and pour on four barrels.

Think of it! Was n't that faith for you? How some of us would have had palpitation of the heart at the suggestion of a quart! And not only that, but he put a trench around his altar, to catch the water and hold it, for he wanted the folks who worked so hard to carry it to get a dip in it themselves. How the old man did like to rub it in!

But, see them; there they go, on the mad gallop down the hill toward the salt sea—the only water to be had—and now here they come; tugging and sweating, and puffing up hill; every man bringing all he can carry, and there it goes over the beautiful altar, with a dreadful—

“Splash—splash! Splash—splash!”

They have been waiting all day for this chance, and now that it has come, how they enjoy it!

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The cold water brigade is always on hand; the most reliable body of troops in the world. If Church pillars were only as constant in season and out, how soon the devil would be in the hospital! The preacher knows that he can always depend on the aforesaid volunteer fire department. They never miss a meeting—"no, not one;" and always take their canteens with them.

"Splash—splash! Splash—splash!" and down goes everything to zero at once. But the best exercise the cold water folks probably ever had was that day at Mount Carmel. Even before the water got into the trench, the happy leader of the meeting cried out joyfully—

"Do it the second time!"

And away they go again, helter-skelter, but with not quite so much of a rush as before; and back they come, all out of breath this time, and splash it goes again. But the old prophet is so full of holy joy that, with shaking sides, and a face like Santa Claus on Christmas morning, he sends them to the bat again with—

"Do it the third time!"

And they did it the third time, but that strike put them out for good on that field, and they never got their innings again. They knew

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when they had enough, and did n't care for any more crow, thank you.

The moral is, that if we will build up the broken-down altar exactly as it should be, and have the sacrifice properly placed thereon, we shall have nothing to fear from any quantity of cold water.



## CHAPTER VI.

### NEED OF GRACE AND GUMPTION.

IT is well to note that the prophet himself got as near heaven as he could at the very beginning of his meeting, by going to the mountain top, an example that the preacher who desires a spiritually fruitful ministry would do well to follow. There must be a positive rise in the preacher's religious life, if he is to reach the masses. He will find it hard to persuade others to take higher ground while he remains in the valley.

It was the disciples who did not go to the mount of transfiguration, who were unable to cast out devils. Jerusalem was n't located on high ground for nothing, nor by accident. Unless we get more religion, sinners won't get any. When Moses came down from the mountain with his face shining, "every man gladly offered an offering of gold unto the Lord."

Elijah also called upon the Lord at the

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proper time as well as in the proper place. He waited until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. Zeal gains nothing by ringing the church bell a couple of hours too soon. Too many Christian workers would have felt like giving up in discouragement because the fire did n't come before noon, and there are preachers who would have dismissed the meeting and gone back down hill with long steps, because it did n't cloud up and begin to thunder early in the morning. The Bible makes it plain that God has a time for doing things as well as a way of doing them, but many over-zealous folks never seem to find it out.

‘To insure success in soul-winning the Christian worker needs sanctified common sense quite as much as he does Scriptural knowledge. Indeed, there are times when he needs gumption about as much as he does grace. We must know when to introduce the subject of religion as well as how to do it.

The Lord needs intelligent service quite as much as He does blind loyalty that is willing to go to the stake. Pounding the Bible and making a noise in church is one thing, and winning men to Christ is another. Peter was made a fisher of men quite as much on account

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of his level head as his big heart, and Paul probably caught more with his tact than he did by preaching all night. He was able to do this because he had learned some things in the making and selling of tents that he could not learn at the feet of Gamaliel.

It was because Paul knew human nature as well as he did Greek, that he was able to make converts even in Cæsar's household; and it was by both wisdom and tact that he saved his head at Athens. Tact wins where great gifts without it would fail. When a preacher finds a farmer butchering on a cold day, and insists that he shall leave a pig in the barrel and go into the house for prayers, it would take a good deal of argument to convince me that he hadn't misunderstood the Lord about his call to preach.

Some preachers, who have zeal like Jehu, never strike the right hour in their ministry, because they have no pendulum. The more steam pressure there is, the more need there is of a good balance wheel. If indiscriminate hard licks could have saved the world, it would have been done in the time of Samson. The truth is, that the more love a man has in his heart the more he needs brains in his head.

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Unless he is as wise as a serpent, he can not be as harmless as a dove. Had the old serpent in Eden been as ignorant of human nature as some of our preachers are, I do n't believe there would have been any fall.

The man who fishes for men must learn to use all kinds of means and all kinds of bait. If he do n't know the difference between trout and catfish, there will not be much hope of his ever making a catch. He must learn when to hold his peace, and when to cry aloud and spare not. Unless he knows when and how to do this, he is on the wrong track if he spends all his time in the study of books. He might as well try to swim in painted water.

There is an occasional man in the ministry who would add much to his preaching ability by giving up the making of sermons for a while, to saw logs in a lumber camp, or to become a brakeman on some good railroad. The man who would take a crowbar to open an oyster has no business in the ministry, but he too often gets there.

The prophet waited for the time for offering the evening sacrifice. It is not an easy thing always, to get the soldier to hold his fire until told to shoot. It is so much easier to pull

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the trigger the moment the enemy is seen. Elijah waited, and, to be sure of success, we must learn to do the same; and we must learn to act without hesitation when the proper time does come. As much skill is needed in fishing for men as in fishing for fish. It takes more than a silver-mounted pole and fine tackle to catch bass.

I have often seen a boy who had a rough stick for a pole, and almost anything for a hook and line, go home with a fine string of fish, while a man fishing near him with a fine outfit would get nothing. The difference in results was not in the equipment. That had nothing to do with the case. It was because the boy knew the fish and how to get them; and it is the knowing how that makes the difference in results in everything, from skinning an eel to running a college.

The old prophet understood his business well enough to know that he must neither hesitate nor anticipate. He was ready for the golden moment when it came. He knew how to hit the nail on the head.

When the cable cars first began running in Chicago, years ago, there was a place where the gripman had to throw off the grip at a

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certain post to the very instant, or there was great danger of a break in the cable. The risk was so great that some of the men were made nervous, and, acting prematurely, brought on the very trouble they wanted to avoid. And in religious work similar things too often happen.

There was a man who was always upsetting things through blind zeal in his ministry. He had a bushy head of hair and a grizzled beard, that made him look like a pirate. He also had a rasping voice that matched his appearance, and wherever he went he was scaring folks half out of their wits. One day he was riding along in an open buggy when he overtook a peddler trudging along with a pack on his back. The preacher stopped his horse with a jerk, and said:

“Do you want to ride?”

“Yes, sir; if you please,” replied the peddler.

“All right; climb in,” said the preacher, in a way that sounded like driving cattle out of a cornfield with a bulldog.

The peddler had scarcely taken his seat in the buggy, when the preacher looked into his face with flaming eyes, and exclaimed—

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“Are you prepared to die?”

“No—I’m not!” cried the peddler, in terror, and out he went into the mud, and took to the woods.

Had Paul, in Cæsar’s household, been like that preacher, he would have been kept chained down in the dungeon all the time.

The cultivation of tact can not be urged too strongly upon all who would win success in anything, and especially upon those who would have it in Christian work. Rehoboam lost the most of his kingdom because his eyes were too little and his mouth too big; and such history is always repeating itself.

Many business men are at the foot of the ladder to-day, simply because they could never learn how to rub the fur the right way, or get honey from the hive without being stung. Tact succeeds where everything else would fail.

Bishop Taylor once built a church by knowing how to borrow a spade. He had just located in a new city, and soon noticed that his nearest neighbor had a wife and two children. One day, when he knew the man was away from home, he went over to borrow a spade, knowing that the woman would have to take some time to find it. He had something in

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his pocket he knew the children liked, and while the mother was out looking for the spade he made friends with the little ones, and thus through the children he made a good impression on their mother.

When he returned the spade he made sure that the husband was at home, and he easily won him through having previously won the family. A dinner was soon given by his new friends, to have him meet some of their friends, and from these he afterward organized his Church.

A woman asked a preacher if he didn't think her baby was the finest he ever saw, and the goose of a man told her he didn't think it was, and then wondered why she didn't come to church any more.

To know how to please will help any one to rise in the world, for a winning way is a fortune in itself. It was because David was a comely person that he could not be kept away from the throne. He didn't make a practice of throwing javelins at folks he didn't like, as Saul did. He had the knack of saying and doing the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way, and so, instead of repelling people, he attracted them to him.



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Somebody has said that against stupidity even the gods are powerless. A stupid man may have the goodness of an angel, but wherever he goes he is like a bull in a china shop.

I once saw a high-school graduate, who had taken the gold medal for scholarship, kneeling at a revival altar seeking religion, when an overzealous woman put her hands on his head, and said, "Jesus said, Suffer the little children to come unto Me," and the result was that she drove the young man away from the meeting. She had a good heart, but was far from being as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A SHORT PRAYER'S QUICK ANSWER.

THE prophet was nearly all day in getting ready to pray. It takes time and effort to pray in earnest. Some people are always willing to pray, but you can never get them to do anything else. They will pray to save planking down cash or doing hard work. A boat-load of people were having a hard time in trying to make their escape from a sinking ship, when a big, strong man said, "I am going to pray." "Not much you won't," said the boat-swain, "you take an oar, and let that little man pray."

How it would shorten our prayers and add force to them, if we would first faithfully do some other things that need to be done! An evangelist went to hold a meeting in a church, so dark that nobody could read the hymns, and before he began to pray for the meeting he

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put in some good lamps, at his own expense. Praying is too often done, just because it is the cheapest and easiest thing that can be done. A great deal of meanness sometimes hides behind a prayer. We pray for the preacher, only because we are not willing to take off our coats and help him; and we pray that the poor may be fed, simply to save having to give them bread. We ask the Lord to bless the whole world, only because it is the cheapest way to get it done.

There is rubbish to clear away, and stumps to pull, and brush to burn, and stones to gather up, and plowing to be done, and clods to smash, and seed to be planted and rolled in, before we can get on praying ground. When a farmer prays for a good crop, the Lord expects him to say amen with a hoe; and the same holds true of prayer in the Church, in the home, and everywhere else. It is a waste of breath to pray, as long as God expects us to first do something else.

Are you refusing to forgive anybody? Then the Lord don't want you to pray very loud for the meeting until you first do that. If you have wronged anybody, God insists that you make the wrong right. Have you broken

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your vows? Then do n't say amen very strong until you fulfill them. Have you been living in sin? Then, escape for thy life. First repent, and then pray.

The first thing to notice is, that the prophet's prayer was very short, which bears out what has been previously said. It was a prayer that raised a most tremendous commotion in heaven, and yet it only contains sixty-three words, and did n't take him thirty seconds to make it. The power of the prayer can never be measured by its length, loudness, nor earnestness. If ever earnest praying was done, it was by those bleeding prophets of Baal, and if ever long and loud praying was done, it was poured out by them that day on Mount Carmel. Read this, to confirm what has been said:

"And they called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.

"And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked.

## A SHORT PRAYER'S QUICK ANSWER

"And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

"And it came to pass when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Their prayer availed nothing, because they were not on praying ground.

But when the time came for Elijah to pray, there was no jumping, nor screaming, nor shouting, nor yelling. His God was not asleep, nor away on a journey, and he knew it, and so did n't make a great noise to get His attention. He simply drew near his altar, "and said" [he did n't have to cry aloud]. He probably turned his face toward the sky, and spoke in a confident, quiet tone, that was all the more impressive for its quietness, in contrast to the loud screams which had been heard all day from the despairing prophets of Baal.

The prayer the prophet made was right to the point, and should be carefully and prayerfully studied by those who do not want their public prayers to be a mere performance, like the ringing of the church bell. He went before the Lord on urgent business, and did n't talk

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about anything else. He asked for something definite, and, asking in faith, he got it.

For immediate results a short telegram beats a long, rambling letter all to pieces. Peter said, "Lord, save me!" and he was up and out of the water almost before he got his feet wet. It was a good thing he did n't have to make a prayer to please a Boston audience that morning. The Tishbite was n't caring what the people around him thought of his prayer. What he wanted was that they should immediately come to know his God, and so he prayed for results right there and then.

It always puts fire in our prayers to be expecting something. We should take it for granted that the Lord is present in the meeting, whether any of the leading members are there or not. If we know that we are there for the Lord, we ought to believe that He is there for us, and be expecting His blessing, no matter how bleak and barren things may look.

The prophet asked for four great things in his little prayer of sixty-three words, and yet prayers by the yard are made in public that never ask for anything. He wanted a revelation of God that would produce deep conviction for sin; reclaim every backslider; destroy idol-

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atry, and convince the people that he was God's man.

Every true minister wants the people to whom he ministers to know God for themselves, and also to know that he is God-sent. He wants them to know that the God of the Bible is a living, loving Presence, who revealed Himself in Christ, and now reveals Christ in men and to men. He will want the people to know God, that His will may be done in them, and their lives become like the days of heaven upon earth. For this he will live, and toil, and strive, and pray, and his highest ambition will be that God shall put His seal upon his ministry, and make men know that his ordination is from above.

"That I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word." How sad that so many who are called preachers never narrow down in their ambition to this. "That I am Thy servant." O no; not that. That men may know that I have built a church, and have done great things. That I have been to college, and have a cultivated mind. That I am a great evangelist, and can be counted on to do great things. That I am a star preacher, and never have to talk to a small house. That

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I am a big man in the Church, and my words have great weight. That I am an orator, and can make the people laugh or weep. That I am this, and I am that. Such, alas! are the real prayers that many of us make. O that the Lord would give us that highest of all ambitions, to be known simply as real men of God!

"Then the fire of the Lord fell!" and when it did fall, everybody knew that it was the fire of the Lord. Not one of them had any doubt about it, for it "consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench, and when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord He is the God!" Not one of them failed to openly confess Him, save the prophets of Baal.

God still has plenty of that same fire, and will freely give it to those who will meet the conditions as completely as Elijah did. Fire that will burn up all opposition and give glorious results. Fire that will be so thorough and unmistakable in its work that the most hardened sinners will have to admit that it comes from above.



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And when the fire of the Lord did fall, how soon there was purity on that mountain. Everything that stood in the Lord's way was not only burnt up, but every one of the idolatrous prophets had to die before sunset. The people first fell on their faces and cried out, "The Lord He is the God! The Lord He is the God!" and then they sprang up at the command of the man of God and fell on the prophets of Baal, before one of them could escape, and taking them down to the Brook Kishon they were slain there.

This is always the sure result when God reveals Himself to the soul. The prophets of Baal have to die. It won't do to parole them, or put them on their good behavior. They must be slain without mercy. Here are the names of some of the most prominent: Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Sorcery, Enmities, Strife, Jealousies, Wraths, Factions, Divisions, Heresies, Envyings, Drunkenness, Revelings, and such like.

One reason why the prophet's prayer was answered so quickly, was because it was properly addressed. It didn't go to the Dead Prayer Office, where so many of ours too often bring

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up, because of a wrong address. When we would have God hear us, we must call upon Him by the right name.

Sometimes we carelessly drop a letter in the mail-box without any address at all, and although it may be a very fine letter, and one of which we are quite proud, it does n't go anywhere, because it has no meaning to Uncle Sam's mail boys. How many prayers have we all made and heard that were much like that! Well put together, perhaps, but God's name was not in the address. A newspaper once said that Dr. So-and-so's morning prayer was the most eloquent invocation ever addressed to a Boston audience. Such prayers may sound grand, but what good can they do?

Elijah addressed his prayer to his own God, the God from whom he expected help. Some folks could pray better if they only had a god of their own to pray to. That was why the prophet got his answer before sundown. Cherith and Zarephath had their drawbacks, but they also had their advantages. The three years he spent there had taught him how to get a prayer through in three seconds; something that has never yet been taught in a theological seminary.

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The raven bread and widow's cake had brought God wondrously near. He had been so well sheltered under the hand of the Lord from the vengeance of Ahab, that the Divine Presence was a reality to him. He called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel; the God who had made the ravens forage for him, and the God who had made His clouds obey him. Calling upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, sent his prayer flying straight to the right place. He called upon a covenant-keeping God, who had made the stars in the heavens witness that He had promised to be faithful to His word.

Elijah called upon the God who took Abraham out of idolatry, and gave him a warranty deed to the Promised Land. To the God who gave Isaac as a child of promise, and sent a substitute to die in his place. The God who took Jacob, the Jew and trickster, and made him a prince and a prophet, and the father of the twelve tribes represented by the stones in his altar.

He called upon the wonder-working God, who had broken the hand of Pharaoh, and delivered Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The God who "found him in a desert land, and

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in the waste howling wilderness, and led him about, and instructed him, and kept him as the apple of His eye." He prayed to the God who had written His name in fire on Mount Sinai, and who had sent fire to consume burnt offerings for Aaron, David, and Solomon. He looked for an answer to his prayer in fire, because he prayed to the God who had answered by fire, and he believed that He would do it again. No wonder he had a fiery answer before he said amen.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SEVEN LOOKS TOWARD THE SEA.

“AND he said, Go again seven times.” These are the words of Elijah to his servant on the top of Mount Carmel, soon after the slaughter of the prophets of Baal. There had been no rain nor dew in the land for three years, and Ahab the king had been going to and fro all over the country, on the hunt for little patches of grass and dried herbage to keep the horses and mules alive.

Big business for a king, was n't it? And yet the very same thing is still being done in many Churches and individual hearts to-day. Incessantly on the hunt for little patches of worldly pleasure, and dried up bunches of fleshly enjoyment to keep the lower nature from starving, and neglecting the weightier matters of the law. Exercising great diligence in quest of dollars and other things that perish, and

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doing nothing for the spiritual nature. Much concerned for the safety of the beasts, and doing nothing for the real good of the kingdom.

The prophet had been Divinely instructed as to certain conditions which must first be complied with, and after they had been fulfilled to the very letter, he went to Ahab, while the sky was still like heated brass, and predicted the sudden coming of a great rain storm. He had then ascended the mountain, taking his servant along to watch while he prayed.

As previously noted, the prayers of the Carmelite were always brief and to the point, and they meant something. They did n't wander all over creation and ask for everything in a way that meant nothing, as was once the case at a prayer-meeting. After a long, rambling, meaningless prayer, that wore everybody out, the pastor said, with a sigh that spake with tongues—

“Well, if anybody can think of anything else under the sun to pray about, let them pray.”

The old prophet on Mount Carmel did n't pray in that way. He began without preamble, told the Lord what he wanted, and expected to get it. Had his prayer been as long drawn out and as indefinite as some of ours, there would

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have been no haste on the part of Ahab in hitching up his chariot. He could have walked his team to Jezreel, and been there a day or two before the dust was laid.

The prayers of some people consist mainly of portico, bay windows, and front door. They are grand and imposing from the outside, but when you open the door to see what is in them, you find yourself out in the back yard. It is the filling in a check that counts. Not the picture of the bank on the end. Too many of our prayers are all stub and cover. They have no filling in. It never took Elijah long to pray when he once got to the right place to begin. Too many of us get lost in the woods, and never get there.

Sometimes he had to first clear away a lot of rubbish and do some very hard and unpleasant work, and at other times he had to blister his feet in climbing to the top of a mountain, but when he once got there he knew where he was, and did n't have to use up much breath in finding a way to begin. He did n't try to pray until he got to the right place to pray, and that is always the important thing.

The Lord pays very little attention to the prayer of the man who goes into a warm room

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to pray, while his wife is out in the cold, digging stovewood out of the snow, or feeding a calf when the weather is below zero. If there was a mountain to climb, or a broken-down altar to build up, or a godless king to be brought up with a round turn, it was first done, and then the prophet could pray with as much zest as a hungry man can eat a good dinner he has earned.

The old man had no stereotyped prayers either, but made a new prayer whenever he had a new need. Trying to make the same old prayer fit every change in circumstances and conditions, is like trying to make the father's old clothes fit the boy, by cutting off the legs of the trousers and shortening the coat sleeves. It may answer a good purpose, but is nothing to be proud of, and its reflex influence is not good for either the man or the boy.

When Elijah prayed he never looked at discouraging appearances, but straight up to God—barring the lone exception of the juniper tree. Some men would have looked at the blind-ing, brazen sky that day, and said:

“There’s no use in my climbing that long, steep hill to pray for rain this morning, and so I’ll find a shady place down here, and wait



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for the wind to change. I've never known rain to come while the wind was in that quarter anyhow. I would simply wear myself out for nothing in getting up the mountain, and may be lose all the influence I've gained with these people; so I'll hold on awhile, and wait for a better prospect. I've done everything the Lord told me to do, and I expect that when He gets ready to send the rain it will come, without any anxiety about it from me, but the wind will have to blow different from what it is doing now before it does. And besides that, it's the wrong time of year for us to even have a heavy dew. If it were only near a change of the moon perhaps something might be expected, but it's not."

But the prophet looked for rain because God had promised it, in spite of the unfavorable signs against it. He didn't know how it was going to come, but his faith said there would be plenty of it, and so he took his servant and began to climb the hill with confidence. And what he did that morning, the Christian should always do. Put your foot on all doubt and rise above it. Ask nothing more than the word of God for anything, and when you get it rest in it.

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Many have no doubt wondered why Elijah put his servant on the lookout to watch for the little cloud. It may have been because he wanted the man to get where he could know God better than he did, for certainly the Tishbite didn't need him there to help his own faith. He knew it was going to rain, and said so before he started up the mountain, and whether a cloud could be seen or not had no bearing on the matter with him. It shows at least that it is a good thing for everybody to have something to do. There is nothing like it for helping the meeting.

Some time ago I was talking with the wife of the janitor of a Methodist church. She said her husband had been keeping a diary for some time. One day she picked the book up, opened it at random, and read the first thing her eye fell on. It was this: "We had a splendid meeting last night. I put one dog out, and three came to the altar."

Gideon's little army was strong, because every man who had nothing to do but find fault and criticise had been sent back home, where he could sit around and whittle and talk politics without doing any special harm.

When people are busy for the Lord, the

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devil finds it hard to get their attention. There is no telling what mischief the prophet's servant might have got into had he been left at the foot of the hill with nothing to do, and I believe the Carmelite showed his wisdom by taking the man to the mountain top with him. Had Jesus not taken Peter, James, and John along to watch while He prayed, they would have missed His transfiguration. The prophet's servant could not pray and plan like his master, but he could do what he was told to do, and bear faithful witness to what happened.

It would be interesting to know what effect the repeated sending of the man to look for the cloud had upon the prophet's servant. When they reached the summit of the mountain, his master probably explained to him the reason for their being there, and may have told him that one of the greatest storms ever known would be raging before sundown, and that he had come up there to watch and pray for it. It is likely that the prophet told the man just how the storm would begin. That a little cloud would rise out of the sea, and make a bee-line for Mount Carmel, growing as it came, until the whole sky would be black with it.

It is not hard to imagine that the servant

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looked into the brassy heavens, and then let his eye fall to a cloud of dust in the plain beneath, where a flock or herd was being driven toward the mountain pass in quest of grass, and then, with incredulous wonder, looked into the calm face of the prophet, and said:

“Rain, master? If we must wait here for rain, I do n’t believe we will ever get back into the valley again.”

But the man of iron faith would not listen to his unbelief, and sternly said: “Talk not to me in that way, for already I hear the sound of abundance of rain. Go up to the top of yonder cliff, from which you can get a wide view, and look toward the sea until you see the cloud rising of which I told you. Do n’t look at the brazen sky; do n’t look at the dusty plain; do n’t look at the blackened earth, but look toward the sea. It ’s from there the cloud will rise. I have the Lord’s promise for a great rain, and it will surely come. Go and look toward the sea, for wonderful things are going to happen.”

Elijah does not seem to have had any servant until this time, for he built up the broken-down altar himself, and the man may have been one of the lukewarm people of the

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day before—mayhap the servant of some destroyed prophet of Baal—who had just begun to serve him, and like one who has newly come into the kingdom, scarcely knew the meaning of faith. If so, his master wanted to give him a lesson or two that would be good for him.

A great thing has been accomplished when the preacher gets the people, who sit in the pews, to begin to look for something positive and definite from the Lord. When a call was made for people seeking blessing to go to a camp-meeting altar, one man went forward and knelt down. The preacher got down beside him, and said:

“What is it you are seeking, brother?”

The man looked up vacantly, and said:

“Oh, nothin’ in pertickler. I jes’ come to help along the meetin’.”

There is too much of that kind of seeking, in religion and everything else. Thousands of people who never amount to much would become giants in accomplishment if they would only get down to business and try to hit some kind of a nail on the head.

The prophet wanted his servant to be looking for something in particular, and very much in particular, too, at that. He would have gone to

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sleep had he been sent up there to just look around for no special object. But he was sent up hill to expect something. We need preaching that will make people bend forward, and expect to see some kind of a cloud rise out of the sea.

In imagination I can see that servant, in a somewhat puzzled frame of mind, beginning to make his way slowly toward the cliff. At last he reaches the top, and standing on the highest pinnacle of rock, he shades his eyes with his hand and gazes intently toward the sea.

"Just as I expected," he murmurs, as he pushes back his turban and wipes his dripping brow on his sleeve, and then sits down on a big stone to rest. "There is n't a sign of a cloud in sight. Not a speck. I'm afraid that the master has been on such a strain that he's becoming shaky in his head. Why, he's getting to be a regular crank about the weather. Of course he thinks it's going to rain, but it never will while things look like this, and the first thing I know his nonsense will get us both into a terrible scrape. There is no telling what Ahab will do about all this slaying of his prophets, if we do n't even get a shower that

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will lay the dust, and I do n't believe we will." And he goes back with a face long enough for a yardstick, to report that the sky is still all brass.

"Go again!" almost screams the prophet in the most commanding way. "Go again, and look toward the sea, for the cloud I told you would arise out of it. Go again, and do n't come back until you have seen it. Go again seven times, and keep looking, or you will miss seeing it start. The very thing I want you to be sure to see. Go again with all speed. Go, and look toward the sea!"

This time there is something in the manner of the prophet that startles his servant, and awes him as nothing else ever did. The sublime faith of the master has a marked effect upon the man. He goes back to the cliff with swift feet, and this time he goes with but little fear of Ahab, for he is beginning to more than half believe that something is going to happen. He stands in his former place and looks, but the sky has not changed. He shakes his head slowly, and has more grave thoughts about his master. He is tempted to go back and report that there is no prospect at all for a change of

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weather, but stops as he remembers that he was forbidden to return until he had seen the cloud.

Once more he goes up and takes another look, but only to be disappointed. He throws himself down in the shadow of a great rock, and begins to despond. His faith is gone, and his fear has returned. He must go and warn his misguided master to flee from the wrath to come, when Ahab puts on his war paint thicker than ever because there has been no rain. He will persuade his master to go down the mountain by another way, and leave the country while there is yet time.

He takes a few steps downward—and stops, for something has happened. The wind has suddenly died away, and all is still! A new hope seizes him. He runs again to the top of the cliff, but there is nothing new to be seen. The burning, glaring sky still mocks him. There is no change, until something has led him to go back the seventh time, and then as he looks he gives a start, and a cry escapes him. It is there! The cloud! the cloud! He is alive all over now. The color comes into his face, and his eyes flash with excitement. He waits not to take a second look, but goes bound-



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ing down the mountain to tell the praying prophet—

“A cloud! a cloud! my master! A cloud! It is rising out of the sea, as you said. It is like a man’s hand! We are safe, for there will be rain, and the king will be glad to let us go!”

This is the signal for which the man of God has waited, and springing to his feet as soon as he hears his servant’s exultant voice, he cries out—

“Run to Ahab, and say, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not!”

And the last we see of the excited servant, he is leaping down the hill toward the king’s tent as fast as he can run.

It seems clear that this part of the prophet’s history was put in God’s Book to teach us that we have a right to count on blessed results, no matter how disheartening appearances may be, when we know in our souls that we have done our prayerful best, and complied with the Lord’s conditions. It would be well, in this connection, to remember that the prophet did n’t look for a drop of rain until the broken-down altar had been rebuilt, and he had restored purity to worship by the destruction of Baal’s

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prophets. There is no use in counting upon much of an outpouring from above, as long as we know that we are not in the attitude of worship.

Elijah's faith held firm because he kept looking toward the source of blessing, and so may ours. He did n't pay any attention to the fact that everything about him was as dry as preaching, but bade his servant to keep on looking toward the sea, and as soon as he knew that a cloud the size of a man's hand could be seen, he knew that his prayer for a great storm had been answered. The Lord had taught him some lessons with the widow's meal that he had n't forgotten. Many of us want to see the dust flying, and the sky turning black all over, before we begin to count much on results, but with the old Carmelite, God's word for a thing was enough.

There is no situation in life when the child of God may not receive a sweeping blessing, if he will only look to the word of the Lord, and appropriate to himself the promises that cover his situation. When the mind is prone to lean toward unbelief, and say that God will not do thus and so, because appearances are

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against it, he must send it back to the Bible, as Elijah sent his servant, and say:

“Go again seven times, and look toward the sea!”

The important thing is to keep on looking toward the source of blessing, and believing that it will surely come because God has promised it.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE RUN TO THE JUNIPER TREE.

THERE was no sense in the prophet going on the gallop down to Jezreel before the chariot of Ahab, and he would n't have done it, either, but for the great time he had been having on Mount Carmel. He made a fool of himself then, just as men do in election times now, because his head had been so turned by the excitement of his wonderful success that he did n't more than half know what he was about.

It was a great waste of strength for him to race with a rainstorm through the dust for seventeen miles, and he might have been much better employed in more sensible ways; but he was so puffed up with conceit just then that he wanted to go into Jezreel ahead of the procession, and give the people a chance to see for themselves what the man who had brought fire from heaven looked like. This made him for-

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get the Lord, and get where Divine aid could not reach him; and things like that are still happening in a spiritual way to-day. The story of Mount Carmel one week, and the juniper tree and the cavern the next, is still repeating itself all around the world. It is doubtful if a better picture of spiritual pride can be found in the Bible than this great footrace of Elijah.

Nothing can wear out the Lord's people any faster than running before the chariot of Ahab; but as long as the prince of evil continues to attend to his business as energetically as he is still doing, races of the Tishbite kind will continue to be run. Nothing will make a Christian feel so much like finding a cave and crawling into it, as to suddenly discover that he has been saying or doing something foolish, or out of common, in his religious life.

It is a dangerous day for a preacher when he preaches the greatest sermon of his life, and it is a perilous day for any Christian when he prays or sings, or gives or speaks, better than he has ever done before; for the devil is sure to walk home from church with us on the day when we outdo ourselves in any respect. In fact, no one ever needs the grace of God any more than he does, when by reason of some

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unusual exploit he begins to find a good deal of satisfaction in looking at himself.

I know it is said that "the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel;" but I believe the plain meaning of this to be, that the hand of the Lord was on him, as it had been all the way through his great test, giving him strength and endurance for the exacting feat, and does not imply that the Spirit of God was directing his steps; for it does not say that the word of the Lord came to him and told him to make the race, as was the case in other movements. There is a sense in which it may be said that the hand of the Lord is upon any athlete when he performs a great feat. If the Lord always dropped us the moment we made a blunder, the juniper tree would be the most thrifty bush in the world.

Almost everything in the Old Testament is a picture of some phase of spiritual life, and to say that Elijah was led by the Spirit of God in his wild chase before the chariot of Ahab, would not be true to Christian experience. It would give Scriptural warrant for all fanaticism. Think of it! The man of God an outrider before the idolatrous and wicked king,

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whose signet had authorized the wholesale massacre of the Lord's people, and no good whatever resulting therefrom. It is contrary to what is known of God's dealings.

What a contrast between the conduct of the prophet when he stood boldly on the mountain top, openly defying the organized enemies of his God, and the cowardly man who is stealing away in the darkness because an angry woman has threatened to take his life. He fails now, because he has taken the campaign into his own hands, and has stopped seeking help from the Lord.

The fact that he is afraid of anything shows that his communion with God has been broken. This is why he forgets all about the past, and breaks pellmell for the wilderness, where he falls prone under the juniper tree, and begins to pray for death, as every man does when he loses his faith through spiritual pride, and does something that makes it easy for the devil to convince him that his ministry or Christian life has been a failure. He wants to die at once as a preacher or Christian worker.

If the prophet had only stopped for a moment to think of the years when the ravens fed him, and when the poor widow's meal and

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oil failed not, how soon he would have got up out of the dust, to go back on the double-quick, and tell Jezebel to her face that her father had a cloven hoof! The deceiver of the brethren would never be able to keep a backslider in his camp over night if he could n't make him entirely forget the past goodness of his God.

How full of light and hope the chapter relating to Elijah in the desert ought to be for each one of us! If a man has good timber in him, the Lord never gives him up simply because he has made a mistake. The child may stumble and fall a thousand times, but as long as there is hope that it will ever learn to walk, its mother keeps on helping it up and giving it another chance, and our Heavenly Father does the same with us.

What a blessed thing that the record of Peter's life did n't end with the scene where he denied his Lord, and that Elijah's grave was not made under the juniper tree! How heaven must have hung in suspense that day to know what answer would be made to the discouraged prophet's prayer for death! But the Lord's plan makes no provision for any tombstones under the juniper



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tree, and the fact that He helped one discouraged man shows that He wants to help every man who may be in a similar situation.

The account of the Tishbite was not yet closed, although he believed that his credit was entirely overdrawn. There were to be no more mountain top experiences for him for some time to come; but there were some great things down in the valley remaining to be done, and that man who lies there pulling his hair under the juniper tree is the very man to do them, and the God of Jacob knows it. Some great powers must be set in motion, and the hand that was true when it held only the widow's cake, alone has the cunning to give the needful touch.

In every case where there is gold in a man, God sticks to him until He brings it out. Our fellowmen turn coldly away from us when we fail to accomplish the great things we set out to do, but God gives us credit for what we would do if we could. When the prodigal got home he found his father looking for him, but his brother never expected him to come back. If men had to be judged by men, to determine their fitness for heaven, angels would weep, for the gates of pearl would never open again.

The prophet made good time in running

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before the chariot of Ahab, for he kept at least a neck ahead of a fresh team of thoroughbreds all the way; but he undoubtedly made still better time in getting to the juniper tree. I don't know the distance, though it was a long run from where he should have been, and he made it in a hurry.

He only took his servant with him a part of the way, and "left him at Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah." He could not have left him in a better place, for there was no base idolatry there to corrupt him. Had he left him at Jezreel, it is doubtful if he would ever have seen him again. Jezebel would have made short work of him.

It may be that the prophet had to leave his servant somewhere, or give up his trip to the juniper tree; for we must remember that this was the man who had seen the cloud no bigger than a man's hand rise out of the sea, and develop into a great storm, and his mind would have been so filled with the wonder of it all that his tongue could not have been kept still, and so there would have been no sleep for the old man under that baleful shrubbery. Our good servant Faith must always be left in

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Judah before we can travel very far into the land of discouragement.

The prophet only went one day's journey into the wilderness, and yet how much precious time he lost! From forty to sixty days at least, for it is uncertain how long he slept or remained in the cave. With such power as he had when he left Samaria, he might have turned the whole country upside down in half the time. How much this emphasizes the importance of our keeping close to the Lord, and staying away from the wilderness!

Notice that the man of God did not pray for either fire or rain under the juniper tree, and no one ever does. It is the worst place in the world to pray for a revival. Such prayers can only be made on the mountain top. The only prayers that can be made under the juniper tree are prayers for death, and are never answered; something for which we should all be thankful. Somebody has said that the only one the Lord can not use is the discouraged man, and it is certainly true. We can never lift up, unless we are also looking up.

But, even under the juniper tree, the faithful man who had been so long living in the

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hand of the Lord, did 'nt quite lose his boarding house, for the God who had kept him alive in famine did not fail him there. True, there were no ravens in that country that could be depended on, and it was n't bread and flesh every night and morning, as in the good old times on the Cherith Circuit, and there was no poor widow with a few consecrated crumbs that were available, and so an angel had to be sent from heaven to keep the discouraged man from starving himself to death before his work was finished.

Backslider, the Lord can help you under the juniper tree, but not by ordinary means. You may be kept alive there, but you will not find it a land of milk and honey.

It was a great mistake for the prophet to go in the strength of that meat forty days, although it was bread that had come down from heaven. If there is anybody who ought to have meals with regularity, it is the man who is trying to do God's work. While the prophet was having "bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh at night," his faith was all right.

Find a Christian who has lost his spiritual power, and has begun to howl and growl about

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the shortcomings of everybody else, and you can put it down for a very stubborn fact that he has been neglecting his Bible and his closet. The order in the wilderness was that the manna should be gathered fresh every day, and that is still the Divine requirement.

Find a preacher whose heart is not in his work, and you find one who is too much occupied with things of sight and sense to find time to study his Bible and pray in secret; and the man who does not pray in secret can never be what God wants him to be in public. When Jesus prayed all night, the multitude sought Him in the morning. It may be that one reason why the Church has been so long in reaching the masses is that the mass of her preachers do not pray half enough. The crying need of the hour is not for more nickel plating on the machinery, but for more steam pressure in the boiler.

When the Carmelite was keeping close to the Lord, he was n't afraid of all the false prophets Ahab could bring out against him; but when he got to looking only at men, his blood turned to water at once. When the devil can make a Christian man think that he is about the only out-and-out religious man in the county, he

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is very well satisfied with his day's work; and when we can see nothing in other people to please us, the chances are that we need a revival in our own hearts. The man who can go from Dan to Beersheba and not see anything good, has a very bad case of beam in his eye.

Look out for the man who goes around claiming to be very jealous for the Lord of Hosts, and complaining that all the salt in the earth has lost its savor except that in his own little cruse. When he stood on the mountain top, the grand old Tishbite had no complaint of any one to make; but as soon as he jumped the track himself he began to find fault with everybody else, and yet he left such men as the noble Naboth behind him when he turned his back and stampeded to the wilderness.

But no matter how the prophet got under the juniper tree, there is deep pathos in his being there; for the sight of a strong man crushed to earth is one of the saddest things known. And how many such wrecks there are! Poor, helpless, weary ones, of whom it might truly be said, "The grasshopper is a burden" to them. Indeed, it seems as if the juniper trees were almost as close together as lamp-posts in

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some lives; and how little we do, compared to what we might do, to make it otherwise!

Here is a poor, disconsolate, disappointed man, crushed to earth with the weight of life, and wanting to die. He feels that he has n't a friend in the world, and so he wants to get out of it. A kind word of encouragement and sympathy would be to him like an angel feast, in the strength of which he might go for forty days; and yet we withhold it, because it seems such a little thing to do.

The hardest thing about the hard things of life is, that we must bear so many of them alone. Many a man will give his goods to feed the poor, and almost give his body to be burned in works of charity, who will not take a poor man by the hand, and say, "Brother, be of good courage;" the very thing his heart is starving for. This old world of ours is in more of a famine to-day for sympathy than it ever was for bread. This is why the rumor that there is corn in Egypt has given so much power to the saloon.

As our hearts have gone out to the old prophet in his oppressive loneliness, perhaps some of us have thought: "I should like to have been the angel that helped him under the

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juniper tree." Well, why not be the angel to help other poor folks under other juniper trees? For there is still plenty of that kind of work to do. God's work in this world is not waiting for wings so much as it is for hands and feet. The most of us are too much afraid of soiling our hands and hurting our manicuring in doing the same kind of work the Good Samaritan did; but if we only had a pair of nice, long, white wings to hold us up out of the mud, what missionaries we would make!

Had the priest and the Levite only stopped to give the half-dead man the right kind of a handshake and a word of encouragement, it might have braced him up to at least make a good start for Jerusalem before the Samaritan reached him. But their going by on the other side, with their heads up, may have hurt him more than the hardest blows the robbers gave him. It don't take a fat roll of bills to be able to do a big lot of good. A friendly hand on the shoulder of John B. Gough made a man of him, and put sunshine into untold thousands of homes.

"It was only a glad 'Good-morning,'  
As she passed along the way;  
But it spread the morning's glory  
Over the livelong day."



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It was a little thing, so easy for any of us to do, and so much needed, and yet we did n't do it. Somebody has said that, if we do n't take joy to heaven with us we won't find it there, and I have no doubt it is true. In this world we have to give to get, and I do n't know of any good reason why it should n't be that way in the next. It do n't take many notes to make a melody, and yet so many of us never sing the little song we might.

“The wounds I might have healed,  
The human sorrow and smart!  
And yet it never was in my soul  
To play so ill a part.  
But evil is wrought by want of thought  
As well as want of heart.”

—*Hood.*

## CHAPTER X.

### OVER THE SEA OF GLASS.

THAT angel breakfast kept Elijah from starving to death under the juniper tree, and gave him strength to make another stage in his aimless journey. In the good days of the past, when the word of the Lord was continually coming to him, he always knew where he was going next, and so could keep right on in a straight line; but the moment he faced in a wrong direction he had no purpose, and began to wobble, just as every one does who leads an aimless life.

The beginner on the bicycle wobbles simply because he is not trying to go anywhere, and the same holds just as true in Christian experience. The prophet on Mount Carmel was a man with a definite plan; but under the juniper tree, and in the cave, he was a man without one. The land of Despair lies hardby the city of No-Aim. When people stop going straight ahead, you can never tell where they will bring up next.

The prophet left the juniper tree with

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nothing in view, and made his "crooked paths" for forty days, till finally he found himself in a cave. Here something happened that was much better for him than an angel breakfast. "The word of the Lord came to him." And whenever the word of the Lord comes to a despairing man, something for his good is about to happen. The God of Elijah would n't give him up, and followed him to that dark cavern. We can never get so far away from the Lord that He will not seek to bring us back.

The prophet was confronted with a great question that often comes to every man who is not where he should be. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" What kind of a place is this for a man who was delivered from all the power of Ahab, and fed by the ravens for three years? What kind of a place is this for the man who saw the fire fall from heaven on Mount Carmel? What kind of a place is this for the man who once knew the joy of the Lord every hour of his life? What kind of a place is this for a man who had such a mother as you had?

What kind of a place is this for a man who was once a happy child in the Sunday-school? What kind of a place is this for one

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who was as carefully brought up as you were? What kind of a place is this for one who once held such a high position in the Church as you did? What kind of a place is this for one who has turned as many souls to Christ as you have?

Man of former power, and faith, and peace, what doest thou here? And the best reply that nine out of ten can make is, "There are so many hypocrites in the Church." A man might as well undertake to excuse himself for being dishonest by saying, "There are so many thieves in town."

All the prophet could say was, "The children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away."

Well, suppose all that had been true, just as he said, did that give him any right to be there hiding in that cave? Could n't he see that he had the finest chance any man ever had to distinguish himself, by showing that the Lord still had an army of one who was all backbone?

Did n't he know the Lord had never lost a battle by having a force too small? Did n't

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he know what Samson had done with the jaw-bone of an ass, and what David had done with a sling? Did n't he know that the worse things looked, the more the Lord would appreciate loyalty in him? Did n't he know that the God who had made the widow's meal hold out as long as it was needed, was able to overturn the whole country with him? Did n't he remember that God was still left, and that one man is always a majority with Him?

To remind him that his God had not yet made an assignment—no matter what others had done—he was shown something of the old-time power he had known so well on Mount Carmel. First came a great hurricane that rent the mountains and broke the rocks; and after the wind came an earthquake; and that was followed by fire, after which the prophet was glad to leave the cave and go out into the daylight, where the Lord spoke to him in a still small voice. This shows how easy it is for the Lord to speak to us when He gets us where He wants us.

And then the Lord gave him a new revelation and a new commission, and we never hear of his going to either the juniper tree or the cavern again. It cleared up his sky, and put

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the springtime in his heart, to find himself back in the Divine order again, and know that his movements were now according to God's plan. From that time on he "stayed put." There is nothing like the peace and rest that is sure to come when we know that our God is directing things. The Juniper Tree Degree comes high, but its lesson is never forgotten.

The Lord showed Himself decidedly in favor of the itinerancy by the way He handled the Tishbite from the start. He knew the man too well to keep him too long in one place. Without the "time limit" the Carmelite might have dropped clear out of sight. Many a man is kept bright because the Lord will not let him get into an easy corner and go to rust.

No man can be properly judged by what he has done in a single place. The preacher who falls down flat in one Church may flourish like a palm tree in the next, for the right kind of a man can always learn something from his mistakes. He don't fall down on the same banana skin twice. Mark wasn't much account with Paul, but he got along fine with Barnabas, and so it may be that had Elijah been kept too long in one place he might never have been heard of.

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It is more than likely that the ministry and methods of the prophet were much criticised by all kinds of people, and it may be that other prophets scored him without mercy, with clubs cut from the juniper tree, every chance they got, but nothing is more certain than that his ministry was a great success, as seen from where angels look; for as soon as a competent man was found to succeed him, he was promoted to an appointment in the City of Light, where, for aught we can tell to the contrary, he may have been engaged ever since in trying to tell sinless hosts what God is doing down here on the earth. Think of the glorious things he could tell, even the angel Gabriel, about the goodness of his God, that he could never know until he knew where the prophet had been, and what the Lord had been to him there.

Without waiting to lay aside his robe of flesh, he went sweeping through the gates, in a jeweled chariot that blazed like fire; and for the first time in the annals of heaven—as his blazing car passed triumphant over the sea of glass, and up through the streets of transparent gold—the angels had a chance to see for themselves just what a faithful, battle-scarred veteran fresh from the front looked like; and in

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the front rank, among the gladdest, perhaps, was seen the shining face of the angel who gave him his first and last call for dinner under the juniper tree.

And then, centuries later, when redemption was about to become an established fact, by "the decease soon to be accomplished at Jerusalem," and a companion was wanted to journey with Moses, on his long delayed visit to the Promised Land, and take part in the transfiguration scene, it was the faithful old servant of God, who had once been lost for three years in the obscurity of the Brook Cherith, who was honored above all the shining hosts of heaven by being chosen for the glorious expedition.

Surely this last and brightest view of the prophet ought to teach us, that on the heights of glory, in the ages to come, the crowning place may be that bestowed upon some faithful child of God, whose lines were cast in humble places, and who had a hard row to hoe while in the flesh.

May the God of Elijah give us all a fresh inspiration, from the time we have been spending with the faithful Tishbite, to be more unselfishly in earnest in our Master's service!







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